



PRESS RELEASE

U.S. ARMY CHEMICAL MATERIALS AGENCY

Umatilla Chemical Depot

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT

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Guest speakers at 1944 Memorial Ceremony March 21

Umatilla Chemical Depot, Hermiston, Ore. – Don Barclay, Deputy Director of the Army's Chemical Materials Agency, Aberdeen, Md., and Maj. Gen. Raymond Rees, Oregon State Adjutant General, will be the guest speakers at a memorial ceremony, Monday, March 21, to honor those who died in a 1944 igloo explosion.

CMA oversees six chemical weapons depots across the nation. Gen. Rees commands the Oregon Army National Guard. This will be the 67th anniversary of the event and the first time in recent memory that ceremony has been held on the actual day of the explosion.

The ceremony will begin at 10 a.m. in Bldg. 54 and end at the site of the explosion. Family members of those who died and the public are invited.

The 1944 accident was the only fatal munitions handling accident in the depot's 70-year history. The depot received its first conventional munitions in October, 1941 on the eve of World War II, and stored conventional ammunition throughout World War II, the Korean War, Vietnam and the Gulf War. The depot began its current mission of chemical weapons storage in the early 1960s and continues that tradition today.

"This memorial ceremony is held in honor of six Americans and Oregonians that contributed so much to our Nation and to the state of Oregon," said Lt. Col. Kris N. Perkins, Depot Commander. "It is an honor to have both the Deputy Director of the Chemical Materials Agency and the Oregon Adjutant General as our guest speakers."

In the 1944 accident, a depot storage igloo, B-1014, containing 264 500-pound conventional bombs, was completely destroyed. Those who died in the accident were: Kenneth Le Roy Fraser, foreman; Lance Stultz, lift truck operator; William Sanders, munitions handler; Harry Dwight Sever, munitions handler; Hiram Cook, truck driver; and Alice Wolgamott, junior laborer. Two crew members working on a nearby railroad pier survived – Glenn P. Long, foreman, and Cecil Pennington, foreman. An extensive Army investigation was unable to determine the specific cause of the accident.

Interested World War II-era depot workers or their family members should provide their names as soon as possible to Laura Harriman, depot protocol officer at (541) 564-5360. This information will be used to permit access to the depot.

Bus transportation will be provided from the Bldg. 54 ceremony to the accident site. Ceremony guests should bring warm clothing.

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Note to Media: Those interested in covering the March 21 ceremony should contact Jim Hackett at (541) 564-5418/5312 by Tuesday, March 15, or by e-mail, james.s.hackett@us.army.mil. Photography will be allowed within certain security requirements.

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